

# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians  
(Section of the Library Association)

EDITOR: W. G. SMITH.

Westminster Public Libraries, Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1.

VOL. 50. NO. 9

SEPTEMBER, 1957

## The Net Book Agreement

**Your Editor suggested last month that the Net Book Agreement, so far as it affects libraries should be abolished. Two Chief Librarians now give their views:—**

*From: L. G. Lovell, Chief Librarian of Rotherham:—*

Congratulations on raising the question of the Net Book Agreement. Many thousands of pounds a year of our grossly inadequate book funds are ending up in the pockets of booksellers rather than as books on our shelves as a result of this restrictive practice. Another point, and an important one, which you do not mention is that it is one of the means used to keep in existence the couple of hundred libraries which are too small to operate efficiently: the immediate result of ending the Agreement would be that larger libraries, buying multiple copies of titles, could negotiate far better terms than the very small ones, which would surely bring home to inefficiently small authorities the invidiousness of their position in a manner far more telling than any available at the moment.

Don't think, though, that you will get the majority of chief librarians to support you. The present system is nice and easy: it relieves the chief librarian of any obligation to take positive action to secure for his authority as good or better terms than his neighbours. It might also be that the narrower profit and overheads margin which would follow from the ending of the Agreement would result in a drastic diminution of the scale of hospitality extended by booksellers to their customers—to an end, perhaps, of the round of dinner parties and visits to booksellers' "stock rooms" (stocked mostly with bottles) which for many chief librarians are a pleasant feature of the Library Association Conference. Nor are you likely to get much support from the Library Association: a correspondence with them which I had earlier this year on the subject, and the action taken by the Association to oppose and negativate an attempt to obtain an improvement in terms which originated in Sheffield a couple of years ago, leaves me in no doubt that the L.A. will oppose any attempt to get the Agreement ended.

The Net Book Agreement may have been all very well before the war, when profit and overheads margins on books were fairly reasonable and the amount spent by libraries was relatively small. In these days those of us who come into contact with *efficient* booksellers, small as well as large, are under no illusions as to the profits made in the business, though, as these firms are all private and not public companies to obtain figures is very, very difficult. The ending of the Agreement would result in keener competition and reduced profit margins for booksellers,

and an increase in their efficiency and economy (as an illustration of the last point, perhaps, the redundancy of the dozens of booksellers' travellers who waste librarians' time for no useful purpose, might become obvious when, as a local authority would contract with a bookseller for so many thousands of pounds worth of business at so many per cent discount, their efforts could not bring their employers an increased slice of the available cake). The saving would end up on our shelves in the form of more books purchasable out of a fixed book fund.

*From E. V. Corbett, Chief Librarian, Wandsworth, and a member of the L.A. Council:—*

I was interested in your August leader with reference to the Net Book Agreement. I share your enthusiasm for a bargain, having also served my apprenticeship in the Indian bazaars, but I frankly cannot see Local Government Authorities, *allowing* their Chief Librarians to act in a manner which any business firm would naturally *expect*.

No, sir, it is extremely doubtful whether Librarians would "be free to make the best terms they can with the booksellers." Rather do I fear that they would be fettered with the time honoured system of tenders which, unsatisfactory as it is, does safeguard the integrity of both Council and officer. In this instance, however, the bookseller who quoted to supply so many thousand pounds worth of new books, at the greatest discount, would get the business. If they were lucky, Librarians might get the right firm of booksellers. On the other hand, the firm that offered the largest discount could well be the one with the least experience of the book trade; in other words, "an ordering house for books." All the straightforward titles would be supplied without difficulty but the books which needed search would be very tardy in making their appearance, if at all.

If the Librarian were permitted to use his book knowledge and business acumen to the benefit of his Authority, then it would undoubtedly be advantageous to the latter if there were no Library Licence. However, in view of the various controls that Councils have to impose upon themselves and their officers, I frankly feel that at this stage the best course of action the Library Association could take, would be to press for increased Library Licence discounts for quantities. Thus there could be negotiated a sliding scale of discounts according to the amount an authority spent with any one bookseller. While this practice might not give the Librarian the personal satisfaction of striking a bargain at each deal, it would at least place the larger spending authorities on a more equitable business basis.

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# *Fewer Chartered Librarians?*

A. C. Jones suggested in July that we should restrict the number of Chartered Librarians as a means of raising salaries. A selection of readers' views are now printed.

## *What of the Special Librarian ?*

What of the special librarian? If such a practice is carried out, the many and varied, newly-formed and expanding special libraries will shortly find themselves without qualified librarians, which would surely be a retrograde step to the days when the library of a specialised concern was the part-time duty of a clerk or typist. If, as A. C. Jones says, there is such, or going to be such an enormous superfluity of Chartered public librarians, I can only suggest that there must be many among them who, if they knew of the untapped opportunities in special libraries, would try their luck in that field. Though there may be less power over one's colleagues in consequence of generally smaller staffs, the interest and responsibility of the job and the inventiveness usually required is a full reward for the constant hard work often needed.

Should such an undesirable limit of Chartered Librarians occur, thus decreasing the number in special libraries, it is surely probable that people wishing to become special librarians will desert the Library Association wholesale for ASLIB and the ASLIB examinations when they materialise. I make no comment on the merits or demerits of this.

As a postscript:—Will the Library Association, when calculating the number of Chartered Librarians required, take into consideration those vacancies notified to ASLIB? What, in fact, will be the relationship with ASLIB in such a matter?

IRIS H. NAPIER.

## *Half a Librarian . . .*

I couldn't agree more with the many disquieting (but nevertheless true) features about our jobs and salaries mentioned by A. C. Jones.

Even without the proposed N.A.L.G.O. "salary freeze" for the Cinderellas of the Local Government Service, the Library Service always appears to lag well behind with salary scales.

It is of no wonder that right from the outset of their careers, young staff are discouraged from ever becoming professionally qualified. Local authorities seldom offer anything like a suitable grant to library students contemplating full-time attendance at a library school—even the Library Association does not offer to assist financially. After considerable sacrifices in leisure, the now qualified librarian is not even guaranteed a worth-while remuneration for his new professional status.

The customary pittance of A.P.T.I offered to successful Registration candidates is a studied insult when compared to practically every other branch of Local Government. I know of several Architectural Assistants, unqualified, who commenced on A.P.T. III, or IV, or even on A.P.T.V, and a new unqualified entrant in a Town and Country Planning Department commencing with A.P.T.III. The Surveying Departments provide even a rosier picture as the qualified Associates in this branch

can pick and choose their posts at A.P.T.VI.

Although A. C. Jones proposes that Librarians should be "hard to get," or in short supply, in order to create a demand for qualified staff, the present attitude of several authorities appears to be that of "half a librarian is better than none."

The lack of response for low-graded professional posts is causing more and more authorities to accept partly-qualified staff at cut price. Until the Library Association take steps to block this breach of professional etiquette and ostracise from the Association members who help to keep up these low standards, Library qualifications will diminish in value and both the higher salaries and the better status we hope to acquire will remain another pipe dream.

RAYMOND WILSON, *Senior Assistant, Weston-super-Mare.*

### **Obsolete Examinations**

(1) If all public libraries were to adopt the system of dividing staff into "professional" and "non-professional" categories, then staff for purely routine and "counter" duties could be selected from people who fall below the standard required before L.A. exams. can be taken; while those whom it is intended to train for professional posts could be chosen from the pick of school-leavers. This would then have the effect of reducing the number of entrants into libraries who are eligible for training; and it would also avoid wastage of useful people on mechanical and repetitive work, after a few months of which they usually leave.

(2) If, in spite of the reduction of candidates eligible for examination by the L.A. which would result from implementing staff-division, a competitive examination were to be found necessary to reduce this number even further, the time to hold such an examination is surely before the person embarks on his career; and not to wait until he is ready to qualify for higher posts. The number of Chartered librarians who are quite lacking even in general knowledge—not to mention the word "culture"—is indeed surprising. One would think from the unworldliness of some of them that libraries were still only to be found in monasteries.

(3) The present Registration examination is certainly in need of considerable overhaul. The disproportion in the syllabus is such that one really wonders how a body of professional librarians ever came to agree to holding such an examination in the first place. Three-sevenths of the syllabus is taken up with classification and cataloguing—which is merely a technique employed by librarians to save time in finding books, etc., while only one-seventh of the examination is concerned with the true business of the librarian—"Assistance to readers." Precisely why all that cerebration about private-presses, Aldus, Garamond and so on is included in an examination at Registration level I do not know. Its effect can only be undesirable; for it either encourages the Incunabula-crank and the Diazo-chromo-litho-bore, and other nightmare creatures whose proper place is in the works of Edward Lear or Heironymus Bosch, but who are found all too often in public libraries; or, on the other hand, as a friend of mine once said, it encourages callow youths without a ha'porth of sensibility and taste in art, to pass airy judgments on the works of bygone centuries. The Admin. paper is at least about running a library—albeit badly, since it is tied up with fusty mumbo-jumbo, and fossilised notions on library architecture. Of the

papers in Group D it is foolish to waste time in criticism.

But having read the proposals for changes in the Registration examination, I feel that there is certainly to be no change for the better. Just to give one example: one of the *compulsory* papers is to be "The organization of knowledge in libraries," which is nothing more than the theory of cataloguing and classification. This will now include the Colon Scheme, and the ALA cataloguing code. But when one reads the large number of codes and schemes and theories which will form the subject matter of this particular paper, one can only assume that the examination, in order to cover this subject adequately, will commence at about five o'clock in the morning and carry on until ten in the evening—unless the whole business is cut short by the invigilator fainting through lack of food.

It seems obvious that more than one paper will have to be set in order to cover this part of the syllabus properly. But later on one sees that the *practical* cataloguing and classification paper is to be *optional*. So that the muddle, disproportion, and general confusion in the new proposals for the Registration examination are worse than in the existing syllabus.

I apologise for the length of these remarks, which are occasioned through Mr. Jones's mention of the new proposals in his article.

(4) I would like to conclude by suggesting that the written form of examination is not the only means of judging aptitude for professional status, and since we are so anxious to place ourselves in a position equal to that of other professions we should adopt the practice of oral examination for some part of the syllabus. This is the rule for nurses, doctors, teachers, officers in the Armed Services, chartered accountants and other professions, and I see no reason why it should be thought an unfair means of examining library students. It would also have the effect of eliminating the aforesaid cranks and bores and literary recluses. I may add that I recommend such a form of examination knowing well that I would be the last person likely to pass one.

I think that careful selection by the methods I have mentioned, coupled with a complete change of emphasis in the examination syllabus, will result in fewer but more highly qualified candidates for library posts in the future.

R. LLOYD, *Tottenham Public Libraries.*

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## NOTICE OF ELECTION

Nominations are invited for the following Officers and Councillors of the Association for the year 1958:

Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Editor.

Nine nationally elected Councillors, three of whom must be under thirty years of age on 1st January, 1958.

A member under the age of thirty may stand for election as national councillor in either category, but if he/she wishes to stand as an "under-thirty" candidate this should be stated specifically, together with the age of the nominee as at 1st January, 1958.

Nominations must be made in writing by two or more members of the Association, countersigned by the nominee, and reach me not later than 15th October, 1957.

E. E. MOON, *Honorary Secretary,*

Central Library, Kensington High Street, London, W.8.

## A Zest Of Lemon

**O**UR blessed *Assistant* has now become a penny arcade. For the price of opting A.A.L. once a year we are privileged to get a monthly panoramic view of what the butler saw in the library world. A fascinating landscape uncoils as we turn the handle and the pictures flicker into life. Generally it is a battle scene with Mark VII Mobiles lumbering across the front exchanging volleys of thunder, while in another corner some Council Olympian may be seen as he plunges to earth, shot down on the wing. In a distant grove, Mr. Hepworth is discernible belabouring an academic colleague as he mouths aside at the rapt spectators, while in the classic forecourt of a dominating edifice whose stones are sooty, a mild-mannered gentleman is seen to have Birmingham by the throat (to his surprise). On all sides *hoi polloi* of the contemporary library scene scuffle and shout derisively, grenades are thrown, maids from Marylebone snipe crisply at males from Heckmondwick, and the air is rent with abuse and counter-abuse. Our virility is debated amid hot cannon smoke (one fears that the next penny's worth may even witness it demonstrably proved), our crystalline virtue struggles against local authority Machiavellis in various odious parts of the same landscape until all the sound and fury fades on the last page and the stunned Average Reader retires fatigued from the contest.

In this bloody arena in July descended a bardic figure, laurel wreath awry, on to a marmoreal podium where he posed before our doubly fascinated gaze twanging Apollo's lyre and emitting punch-lines from the Thousand Best Quotes. Unpredicatably enough Latinity now enters the lists, and it is the advent of such classical equipoise into our Barnum and Bailey diorama that has aroused me to utter a few harsh croaks from my toadstool—you haven't, by the way, a choice Greek fount with which to enhance my vatic utterance?

To intercline strife our journal seems bent on adding spice in the form of quips from the Masters; the recipe is now Latinity and animosity; my querulous point, do they mix? *Nugis addere pondus*<sup>1</sup> (I shall make no such craven concessions to your readers' classical deficiencies. They shall translate unaided) is to render the nullity of the writing even more resonant, or was our bardic Apollo, Mr. Jones, underlining the rarity of his theme merely? *Rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cycno*<sup>2</sup> Mr. Jones may well be, but need he emphasise it so blatantly? And, more to the point, which oracle is going to preside over the monthly bioscope—Apollo or Cassandra? There is only room for one in this peepshow, and when the two clash the din is more cacophonous than that produced by the entire corps of library mercenaries hacking each other about in violent prop sword-play. We will not embarrass by asking "why do Assistants so spuriously rage?" for we know. Instead we will grunt a word of advice from the pit: first to Apollo, *les citations . . . chose utile, chose ingenieuse, chose excellente, lorsqu'on n'en abuse pas*,<sup>3</sup> secondly to Cassandra (who represents, of course, inspiration flowing from the Editorial chair) *brûler n'est pas répondre*,<sup>4</sup> or, keep it in English.

I apologise for interrupting the performance with such abruptness, but we do need just one redolence at a time in the flavouring of our drinks from the Bierian spring, just one zest of lemon, so that our palates be not confused. Or one of the bibliopotamoi may be tempted to offer the management a *bunch* of lemons.

D. E. GERARD, Deputy, Nottingham P.L.

<sup>1</sup> Horace; <sup>2</sup> Juvenal; <sup>3</sup> Fourier; <sup>4</sup> Desmoulins.

# Birmingham and the Assistant Librarian

Our July issue roused strong feelings—so much so that it is impossible to print all the letters received without devoting the whole of this issue to the one subject. We have decided not to print most of the letters in our favour and are giving most of the space available to shortened versions of those expressing opposing views. We apologise for the cuts and omissions and hope that the result fairly expresses some of your opinions.

## *Willats Waxes Wroth*

In the July issue, under the caption, "Birmingham Blues," after suggesting that all who think differently from the Editor, Henry Garnett, Miss M. Cook and their supporters are nonentities who know and respect nothing but mediocrity, it is suggested that "Smith and Liberty" are synonymous.

We are then told that Birmingham should apologise to the Editor, and it is inferred that the City Librarian of Birmingham is hammy at public relations, insulting to the "Browning Version," and lacking in humour because he has dared to indulge in a satirical hint at his opponents and critics. To say the least, this shows lack of respect to the Chief Officer of a large and important library system.

No one minds INFORMED criticism, but this malevolent "hit and run" nonsense is unworthy of a tabloid daily's hack columnist.

E. A. WILLATS, *Islington Public Libraries.*

*Editor's comment:* (1) Mr. Willats seems to be an apt pupil of the tabloid journalism he affects to despise.

(2) His reverence for High Authority reminds us of Neville Chamberlain, who used to lecture the national newspaper editors on the necessity of being polite to Hitler.

## *Miss Walker's Disgust*

As many aspects of the *Assistant Librarian* disgust me with homely regularity, the appearance of the Garnett letter did not arouse any undue astonishment. That it was not worth paper space in any professional journal was no reason for disqualifying it from blazing publicity in ours; one has become hardened to this. I believe that the editor was following his favourite star which leads him to print anything however crude, badly written, facile and tasteless if it will stir up a little dirt, drag in a few letters, stimulate, however artificially, some controversy. I use the word "tasteless" deliberately and suggest that the editor could perhaps consult some good dictionary for in his use of "taste," however respectable the political columnist from whom he quotes, he shows the same incapacity for distinguishing between a moral and aesthetic issue that I have noticed many times before. If something is in bad taste it offends the aesthetic faculty principally and there is nothing mediocre about this offence though the editor has cause enough to play it down.

I would respect him far more if he had admitted in some way that he saw in the Garnett letter a way of filling the *Assistant* for months

ahead; he should feel very pleased with himself that we have, so ingloriously led by Birmingham, risen to the bait. But like a fox-hunter who will admit no pleasure in the chase, but hunts only to kill vermin, our Hon. Editor has to try to disguise his real motive in a mass of sentimental false righteousness. We are used to being considered half-witted, but he has overplayed his hand a little in imagining we were all born yesterday into the bargain.

BRENDA WALKER, *Manchester Reference Library.*

### **Back to Pre-War**

Recent issues of the *Assistant Librarian* suggest that it is suffering from a deplorable lack of editorial policy and sense of purpose. You complain (quite rightly) of apathy among members and yet you fail to take full advantage of the opportunity offered you. If you produced a stimulating journal—topical, authoritative and, above all, constructive—it would be possible to arouse interest and enthusiasm and create a feeling of common purpose among members. This constructive attitude is missing and, as a result, any potential value or influence you may have is being lost. Members can have no respect for the *Assistant* as it now appears. Recent issues contain nothing likely to whip up enthusiasm and interest among the apathetic and no active member can be satisfied with your futile but desperate attempts to make yourself “interesting” and accomplish “an editorial performance comparable to the climbing of Everest.” Where then is your policy and purpose?

You might care to bear in mind that tutors still refer students to pre-war issues of the *Library Assistant*, where they find valuable features such as “Students’ Problems.” One wonders how many students in the year 1975 will be using current issues of the *Assistant Librarian* as a source of useful material, other than as a practical example of how not to run a professional periodical.

JOHN BUTCHER, *Wednesbury Public Library.*

*Editor’s comment: We feel that it would be a pity if we gave the impression that professional education alone makes the “complete librarian.” Mr. Butcher is, however, incorrect to imply that no attention is paid to it—see for example the Examination Supplement appearing in this issue, which takes up considerably more space than the pre-war “Students’ Problems.” We would also draw attention to the A.A.L.’s pamphlet guides to the various examinations which partly offset the need for some types of advice given previously in the “Assistant.”*

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## **A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES**

### **FULL LENGTH COURSES.**

Applications for F.P.E., Registration, and Final courses beginning November, 1957, must be completed and returned by 30th September. Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current edition of the *Students’ Handbook* (L.A. 4s. post free).

### **FORMS, FEES AND ENQUIRIES.**

Forms may be obtained from the A.A.L. Hon. Education and Sales Officer, Mr. J. S. Davey, F.L.A., 49, Halstead Gardens, London, N.21, who will be pleased to answer any enquiries concerning the courses. Stamped addressed envelopes for replies would be appreciated. The fee for each course is £2 10s. plus 10s. extra to students in Africa, America, Asia and Australia.

## ***The Projection of Missiles in Vitreous Structures***

It did not need a man of letters of the eminence of Mr. Henry Garnett to reveal the grisly spectres which lurk in the more-publicised libraries.

For example, on Monday, 1st July, I received a request from the Westminster Public Library for a volume of Molloy's *Automobile Repair*, with the usual note "Westminster copy temporarily missing," whatever that phrase may mean. As our set of the work is in steady use in our Reference Library, I instructed our Reference Librarian to enquire of Westminster whether a fortnight's loan would be adequate. In my presence she 'phoned Westminster at 11 a.m., and this intriguing conversation took place:—

Greenwich: "L.U.C. assistant, please."

Westminster: "Who?"

Greenwich: "The assistant dealing with London Union Catalogue enquiries."

Westminster: "Oh! I see." Pause. "Well . . . er . . . um . . . It's rather difficult just now. You see they are all at tea. Will you 'phone later?"

Greenwich: "Will you give this message to the L.U.C. assistant, and ask him to 'phone back? (Text of message).

Westminster: "Oh . . . er . . . yes. Alright then."

That was sixteen days ago. The offer to lend is still open; the reply is still awaited.

What happens in Birmingham or Westminster is no concern of mine. My only purpose in writing this letter is to see what happens to it.

DAVID LEGGATT, *Chief Librarian, Greenwich.*

*Editor's comment:* (1) Surely, what goes on in Birmingham or Westminster, or in any other library IS the concern of every librarian who is interested in his profession as a whole. Any other attitude indicates a bad case of parochialism.

(2) How did Mr. Leggatt know what the Westminster assistant was saying? Was he tapping the telephones?

### ***Too Much Correspondence?***

Some time ago we were assured that the *Assistant Librarian* had taken a turn for the better. It was to become a lively, entertaining journal, etc.

What has happened to it? It has become a verbal battle-ground consisting almost solely of letters to the editor. Whilst agreeing that the opinions of the readers should find a place in any good journal, I think that in this case the theory has been taken to extremes. Fourteen pages of letters out of a total of sixteen pages might lead one to think that unless the various correspondents had contributed we would not have an issue at all.

Let us read our colleagues' views in our magazine by all means, but please let us have a magazine with letters and not a collection of letters prefaced by an editorial and tied up by the Council Notes.

M. HUGHES, *Bradford Public Library.*

I read your comments re the Birmingham Reference Library case with interest, but I am afraid that I strongly disagree with what you say. In the first place, I feel that you are more than a little smug. Put yourself in the position of the unfortunates at Birmingham, and imagine how you would like it, if someone came snooping round your library in order to write a ribald letter to the *Assistant Librarian*.

Secondly, the original article written by Henry Garnett would have been an amusing and witty piece, if applied to libraries in general. But, because the author applied it to a specific library, which he named, the piece instantly became a personal attack on the staff of that establishment.

DEREK J. WAY, *Public Library, West Bromwich.*

### ***The Daily Mirror and the Assistant Librarian***

R. Lloyd and R. M. Lyle may see things a little clearer if they think of the L.A.R. as I do: as *The Times* of Librarianship, with the *Assistant Librarian* as the *Daily Mirror*. We all file *The Times* and buy its index, as librarians, because although much of it is dull, prosaic and sometimes not topical, it is always authoritative and may safely be relied on and referred to at a later date, if need be. The *Daily Mirror* on the other hand, is always enjoyable, provocative and very entertaining, except I guess to Messrs. Woods and Willats, who must be very serious types. Most people know that you can wrap the fish in it the next day and be no worse off.

R. L. PEARCE, *Folkestone Public Library.*

So the *Assistant Librarian* has been called the *Daily Mirror* of librarianship. Perhaps your correspondents are right, because it certainly hasn't the measured dignity of some other journals. However, what is important is that it is *read*, and written to! There must be a good many editors of journals of librarianship who wish they could say the same of their publications—I know that I do.

ALAN MORLEY, *Hon. Editor, "Kent News Letter."*

### ***Ginger for the "Record"***

It would seem that Librarianship is a curiously divided profession. In the July issue of this journal one finds a sense of proportion sadly lacking. Librarians are apparently infallible creatures. They have all the virtues but none of the vices. The *Assistant Librarian* prints "murderous misrepresentation masquerading as criticism" and the *Record* lies stagnant. I can only suggest a solution to the problems of editorship: this is that the respective editors of these two journals should change places for a fixed period of time. The ginger will then go where it is needed most and the good taste may exercise its steadying influence in the appropriate direction.

S. J. PAGET, *Public Library, Chelmsford.*

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## Some Other Correspondence

### Examination Conditions

I would like to compliment all those concerned, on the organisation of the sittings of this years examinations at Chaucer House.

What could be more delightful, for example, than the urbanely whispered conversations with which the invigilators diverted the examinees? And those charming period desks from the university, how soaked they were in academic tradition, how inspiringly they swayed from side to side as one tried to write on them, with what feline malice did they challenge one to sit comfortably at them! Then we had the sounds from the busy world outside, the roar of cars and lorries being repaired, hammering, workmen happily shouting, whistling and singing at their tasks. No stuffily learned silence here to remind us of our libraries! How kind it is of the authorities to organise the examinations so informally, thus driving away all our nervousness, as well as our slim chances of passing!

JOHN A. CUNLIFFE.

### Cheers for Chandler

May I offer the following as a comment on the article *Parsifal of the Pulpis*, by Mr. Gerard:—

O Literature, we hail Thee, Finest Art.  
From Thou each one of us his living gains,  
And Novel, Thou art nearest to our heart  
Since now, with sage's care and studious pains  
A neophyte of Leavis comes to chart  
Those higher Realms of Bliss where CHANDLER reigns.

D. J. SIMPSON, *Branch Librarian, Nottingham.*

### OMAN—Art of War in the Middle Ages

This is not out of print. A revision by J. H. Beeler is published by the Cornell University Press, at 24/-, and handled by the O.U.P. in this country.

We ordered it and were told that it was unobtainable, but I am assured that there are actual copies.

J. G. O'LEARY, *Dagenham Public Libraries.*

### Phillips on Finance

May I be permitted to refer to Mr. Moon's light-hearted comments on the 1957 Annual General Meeting of the A.A.L. in the last issue.

It was easy at the meeting to excuse Mr. Davinson's naiveté and lack of experience in financial matters, but I cannot reasonably be expected to overlook the Honorary Secretary's published misinterpretation of my regrettably unsuccessful efforts to elicit a true picture of the Association's financial position. It was only when the Platform provided a warning note about the meagre nature of the "Balance in hand" in the General Account Section of the Annual Statement of Income and Expenditure that I was concerned to point out that a full Balance Sheet of the assets of the Association was not being presented.

As an old member of the A.A.L. Council, Mr. Moon well understands (as will Mr. Davinson when he emerges from his fledgling status), that I quite deliberately refuse to "understand" a financial policy, which progressively invests every spare penny in building up valuable stocks of text-books—each calculated to result in eventual and sometimes immediate profit—and, at the same time, loudly bemoans the fact that little hard cash is left in the kitty.

Members of the Association who may be worried at the small actual balance in the Account should take heart from the fact that, only a few years ago, a seemingly well-estimated deficit was turned almost overnight into a most handsome credit by the unexpectedly high sales of certain of the Association's publications.

W. HOWARD PHILLIPS, *Deputy Librarian, Sheffield.*

## Antiquarian Rubbish

In her interesting article on *Subject Departments and the Assistant* last month, Miss E. K. Wilson makes two points which need further amplification.

She passes over the true nature of a local collection and her method could lead to a collection overburdened with antiquarian rubbish. It is an error commonly made and stemming from a failure to ask two questions before considering methods: what should be collected, and (before that question can be answered) what is the purpose of a local collection. The purpose is to collect, arrange and preserve material illustrative of past and present local society for the use of future scholars and researchers. Anyone with any acquaintance with historical research will now see the answer to the second question. The material to be collected is of two kinds: source material and secondary material. The former is manuscript or printed contemporary evidence (administrative and legal records; ecclesiastical and parochial records; manorial records; private letters, memoranda, deeds and accounts; newspapers—complete, handbills, pamphlets; maps, prints, plans, sketches and photographs; directories, year-books, handbooks, time-tables and so forth), the latter, what previous reputable researchers have written as their considered interpretation of these items of evidence. In such a scheme, cuttings from national newspapers have little place. If such items are "news" they will generally be traceable through *The Times Index*, which will be sufficient for researchers, or noted in far greater detail in the local Press: if the items are "features" in the more popular national Press, they will be of ephemeral value, though an index could be made of them. But the local newspapers should on no account be cut up and mounted, but stored complete and unmulitlated, for even the advertisements are of historical importance. An index to the local newspapers would be invaluable. Having done research on local newspapers, I can assure you of their great value if kept complete.

The second point is to question the necessity, which Miss Wilson implies, of closely classifying newspaper cuttings. She mentions *The Times*. If she were to visit *The Times Library* where the *Index* is compiled, she would see that cuttings are not classified at all, but are kept alphabetically by subject. The Librarian will enthusiastically point out that, whatever the pundits may, say, the system works excellently.

P. S. MORRISH, Assistant, Greenwich Public Library.

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